

YEAR 2000 ACT

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Year 2000 Act. While most people are aware of the Year 2000 computer problem, I have consistently been struck by the lack of specific information on the exact nature and magnitude of the problem.

The Subcommittee on Technology, of which I am the Ranking Member, has taken the lead in holding hearings on the Y2K issue. We have spent a lot of time reviewing Federal efforts and promoting the free flow of information on the Y2K problem. However, there has been several gaps in our Y2K efforts, and the intent of this legislation is to fill these gaps.

This bill has four very specific goals: 1) to raise consumer awareness and create a consumer Y2K checklist; 2) to raise Y2K awareness in small and medium sized businesses and create a Y2K self-assessment checklist for the nation's small and medium-sized companies; 3) to require Federal agencies that have worked with outside entities to ensure that all date sensitive data exchanges are Year 2000 compliant; and 4) to require the Secretary of Commerce to report to Congress on the economic implications of a global Y2K problem.

Other than federal agencies, we have been given little more than anecdotal evidence and generalities regarding the total effect of the Year 2000 computer problem. However, there is general agreement that computer hardware and software, as well as embedded microchips found in many consumer products, could fail after January 1, 2000.

More importantly, I find that many people do not know how Y2K will impact them, nor do they know what specific actions they can take to minimize the impact of the Y2K problem on their everyday lives. This bill requires the Undersecretary for Technology at the Department of Commerce to develop a Year 2000 self-assessment checklist for consumers; provide a list of all federal government Year 2000 computer problem resources; list all GSA approved Year 2000 compliant products; and conduct a series of public awareness announcements and seminars on the impact of the Y2K problem on consumer products and services. These goals are consistent with the recommendations made by witnesses who have appeared before the Subcommittee on Technology, and I am confident that with the right information, consumers will be able to make those decisions necessary to minimize the disruption the Y2K computer problem.

The situation at small and medium-sized businesses mirrors that of consumers. The nation's more than 381,000 small- and medium-sized manufacturers contribute more than half of the country's total value in manufacturing. However, as of 1997, 88% of all companies with fewer than 2000 employees had not yet started Year 2000 remediation projects.

Small and medium-sized companies are an integral part of the business supply chain, becoming increasingly reliant on computer applications for manufacturing operations, accounting and billing practices, and meeting just-in-time order and delivery concepts. To assist our small and medium-sized manufacturers in

meeting the Y2K challenge, this bill requires that the National Institute of Standards and Technology's highly successful Manufacturing Extension Partnership program, working with the Small Business Administration, identify the best practices to attack the problem, develop a Year 2000 self-assessment checklist, and list all federal government Y2K resources including the General Services listing of approved Y2K compliant products.

Federal agencies make thousands of date sensitive data exchanges every day. These data exchanges include social security and Medicare information, information related to the air traffic control system, and important financial transactions. Consequently, as federal computer systems are converted to process year 2000 dates, the associated data exchanges must also be made Year 2000 compliant.

The testing and implementation of Year 2000 compliant data exchanges must be closely coordinated with exchange partners. Agencies must not only test its own software, but effective testing includes end-to-end testing, and agreed upon date formats with all exchange partners. If these Year 2000 data exchanges do not function properly, data will not be exchanged between systems or invalid data could cause receiving computer systems to malfunction. In other words, regardless of federal efforts to fix its own computer systems, unless their data exchange partners have Y2K compliant systems, the computer network as a whole will fail.

A recent GAO report entitled "Year 2000 Computing Crisis: Actions Needed on Electronic Data Exchanges" found that federal agencies have made little progress in addressing this data exchange issues. This legislation is based on these specific GAO recommendations, and will help ensure that federal agencies fully address the data exchange issue. This legislation also requires agencies to establish a test schedule with data exchange partners, notify exchange partners of the implications and consequences of non-compliance, develop contingency plans, and send a quarterly report to Congress outlining their progress.

Finally, this bill requires the Secretary of Commerce to report to Congress on the international implications of the Y2K problem, and outline the potential impact on the U.S. economy. Again, we lack specific information on how other countries are addressing the Y2K issue, and the international implications are truly profound. Disruptions in international financial services, international air travel, international telecommunications, and international commercial transactions are all possible scenarios.

However, it is near impossible to make contingency plans in the face of so little and often inadequate information. And as I mentioned earlier, it is lack of information that leads to panic and uncertainty. I believe that such an international assessment could be a guide post for federal and private sector actions.

With so much to be done before January 1, 2000, there isn't much time to act. While we can't legislate Y2K compliance, we must ensure the availability of good information so that consumers and small businesses are able to check existing products, make sure their equipment will work with other equipment, and most importantly, successfully address any Y2K problems in their operations.

With this information in hand, I believe that the public and Congress will be able to make the right decisions and avoid the panic which is so often predicted in articles about the Y2K computer crisis.

I urge co-sponsorship of this legislation, as well as its swift passage.

RAPE OF NUNS IN INDIA MUST BE INVESTIGATED**HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I was very distressed to learn from Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, of the rape of four nuns in the Madhya Pradesh state of India. According to published reports, a gang of armed men forced their way into a Christy Jyoti Convent School, vandalized school property, and raped and terrorized the nuns.

This terrible incident shows that it is not safe to be a member of a religious minority in Hindu India. Christian groups have reported a spate of attacks on members of the minority community since a Hindu nationalist-led coalition took office in New Delhi six months ago. The Indian government seems to have little interest in protecting the rights of religious minorities, whether Sikh, Christian, Muslim, or other. India's claims of secularism and democracy are suspect.

The rapes were reported to India's National Commission on Minorities, which referred the incident to the National Human Rights Commission. America will be watching closely to see how the Indian Government handles it.

All who love freedom must condemn this terrible incident. This offers one more reason for American taxpayers to be wary of supporting the questionable Indian government. We must maintain pressure on India until all the people of South Asia are free. We must support self-determination for all states throughout the subcontinent, including a free and fair vote in Punjab, Kashmir.

I am placing the Council of Khalistan's press release and articles on the rape into the RECORD.

[From the Council of Khalistan, Sept. 28, 1998]

FOUR NUNS RAPED IN INDIA

WASHINGTON.—Four nuns were raped in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh on September 23. The case was sent to the National Commission on Minorities, which referred it to the National Human Rights Commission.

"This rape was designed to threaten religious minorities and prevent anyone from objecting to the repression India practices against its religious and ethnic minorities," said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, the government pro tempore of Khalistan, the independent Sikh homeland declared independent on October 7, 1987. The Council of Khalistan leads the Sikh Nation's peaceful, democratic, non-violent movement for independence.

"Such ghastly crimes are a disgrace for the nation and make us hang our heads in shame," said Tahir Mahmood, chairman of the National Commission on Minorities.

"On behalf of the Sikh Nation, I extend our deepest sympathies to India's Christians and to the nuns who were raped for the political

advancement of Hindutva," said Dr. Aulakh. "If swift action is not taken, it will once again show India's religious intolerance and its terrorism against the minorities under its rule," he said.

The Indian government has murdered more than 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, over 200,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947, almost 60,000 Kashmiri Muslims since 1988, and tens of thousands of Assamese, Tamils, Manipuris, Dalits, and others. The U.S. State Department reported that the Indian government paid over 41,000 cash bounties to police officers for killing Sikhs. More than 50,000 young Sikhs have been abducted by the police, tortured, and killed, then their bodies were declared unidentified and cremated.

"These rapes are of a piece with the repression in Punjab, Khalistan, in Kashmir, and throughout the nations occupied by India," Dr. Aulakh said. "It is of a piece with the murders of Catholic priests in Bihar last year. The real aims of India's theocracy are now exposed to the world," he said. "It is clear that there is no place in Indian democracy for Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, or any other minorities," Dr. Aulakh added. "As the Sikhs who recently demonstrated at the United Nations noted, a religiously intolerant country cannot be democratic."

Dr. Aulakh called on the United States to maintain its sanctions against India. "The repression of minorities and the nuclearization of South Asia by the Indian government both support India's dreams of empire and its drive for hegemony over all South Asia," he said. He called on India to hold an internationally-supervised plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan to let the Sikh Nation decide its future in a free and fair vote. He said that the people of Kashmir should have the plebiscite they are seeking as well. "That is the democratic way to do things," Dr. Aulakh said. "If India will not do this, how can it call itself a democracy?"

[From the Burning Punjab News, Oct. 2, 1998]
NUNS' RAPE CASE—MOOPANAR HITS OUT AT VHP

MADRAS.—Tamil Maanila Congress president G K Moopanar has demanded that those involved in the rape of four nuns in Madhya Pradesh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad functionaries who justified the incident, be detained under the National Security Act. In a statement here, he termed as 'politically uncivilised,' the VHP describing the culprits as 'patriotic youth'. The BJP-led Government at the Centre should nip this tendency in the bud before such criminal act spread to other parts of the country, he added. Referring to the VHP's reported description of the nuns as 'betrayers of the country, Mr. Moopanar said this was unpardonable and went against the Constitution.

[From the Burning Punjab News, Sept. 29, 1998]

MINORITIES COMMISSION CONDEMNS RAPE OF NUNS

NEW DELHI.—India's National Commission for Minorities has strongly condemned the alleged rape of four nuns at Bhandaria village in Jharva district of Madhya Pradesh on September 23. "Such ghastly crimes are a disgrace for the nation and make us hang our heads in shame," said NCM chairman Tahir Mahmood in a press statement. Professor Mahmood added that the NC did receive a complaint by fax in this regard from a prominent all-India Christian organization. "Finding it to be a case of wild abuse of basic human rights and militancy against women's right to modesty, rather than violation of minority rights, I forwarded it with a request for immediate action to the National Human Rights Commission and the National

Commission for Women," Professor Mahmood said. The Madhya Pradesh Government "must move into swift action treating this case as a test for its genuine commitment to protection of humanitarian values and human rights," the NCM chairman said.

[From the Hindustan Times, Oct. 1, 1998]

VHP WANTS FOREIGN MISSIONARIES TO LEAVE

NEW DELHI.—The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) today demanded that foreign missionaries should not be allowed to function in the country since they were acting as insurgent groups in some areas and forcibly converting Hindus in some other parts.

Although senior VHP leader Giriraj Kishore refused to speak on it, he is understood to have raised this issue at a meeting with a Canadian High Commission official today.

But he was open in stating that the VHP would urge the missionaries to go on their own while also creating social awareness on the issue.

Interestingly, Mr. Kishore's remarks came at a Press conference called to disassociate the VHP from the views expressed by another senior VHP leader B.L. Sharma Prem on the Jhabua incident and the "one-side" projection given to it by a prominent daily which, he claimed, sought to put the entire blame for the incident on the VHP. Here, Mr. Kishore pointed out, even the delegation which called on Home Minister L. K. Advani did not blame the VHP.

Mr. Prem had justified the attack on the nuns on the ground that the missionaries represented "antinational forces" working against Hindu interests and that the incident was sparked by the anger of patriotic Hindu youth against them.

Mr. Prem, who had demanded that the Centre throw out those who sought to convert Hindus to Christianity, has reportedly been asked to seek the VHP's sanction before speaking on its behalf. Although Mr. Kishore disassociated the organization from Mr. Prem's remarks, he tried to defend his colleague by maintaining that Mr. Prem may have said what he did because of the track record of the Christian missionaries in tribal areas.

Mr. Kishore's remarks today reflected the VHP's dilemma of exploiting the Jhabua incident to put the Congress Government in Madhya Pradesh on the mat and to use it for its own campaign against the missionaries.

Although Mr. Kishore condemned the Jhabua incident and urged the Government to bring the culprits to book at the earliest, he could not restrain himself from demanding that the Christians also condemn any attack on Hindus in Christian-majority areas.

The VHP leader, who charged that a criminal issue involving Christians was being projected as a communal problem in the case of the Jhabua incident, however, virtually dubbed the insurgency problem in the North-East as a Hindu-Christian issue. He described the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) as a "Christian and terrorist" outfit and alleged that several cases of attacks on Hindus were reported in Nagaland. To a question whether insurgency in the North-East was based on religion he maintained that members of a particular community were behind it.

While the VHP leader called for the ouster of the foreign missionaries, he defended the activities of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) and other organizations operating abroad. According to Mr. Kishore, these groups did not indulge in forceful conversions.

Mr. Kishore also dismissed reports about attacks on Christians in Gujarat as a "one-sided newspaper propaganda" and went on to

allege that the Muslims were also seeking to marry Gujarati girls as part of a larger design.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
FOUNDATION VETERANS
BRAINTRUST

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 2, 1998

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this year during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation proceedings, I along with my colleague on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Congressman SANFORD BISHOP, hosted the 10th annual Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Veterans Braintrust. For the past 10 years the Braintrust has been the premiere forum for discussion and policy debate between African-American veterans and leaders in government. It is important because so many African-Americans have served, or have family members who served honorably in the U.S. military. Consequently, what happens in terms of veterans' well-being is significantly interrelated to the African-American community as a whole. Congressman RANGEL, Ranking Democratic Member on the Committee on Ways and Means and a decorated Korean War veteran, established the Braintrust 10 years ago, and Congressman BISHOP and I are proud to continue his work and legacy on behalf of African-American veterans. Congressman RANGEL was honored during the proceedings for his work and legacy in this area. Overall, the proceedings were very well received, with a standing room only audience in attendance.

This year's Braintrust entitled "The Future of Veterans Education and Entrepreneurship," gave us a national forum to discuss ways to improve access to education and small business, two key elements essential for success and prosperity in our communities, particularly among veterans. The moderator for the Braintrust, Dr. Reginald Wilson, led a very distinguished panel of experts, government officials, military sociologist, academicians, advocates and veteran business owners including Dr. Joshua Angrist, Mr. Dennis Douglass, Mr. Steven Pappas, Dr. David Segal, Dr. Gantz, Dr. Dorothy Simpson-Taylor, Mr. Duane Jackson, Mr. Ralph Thomas III, Mr. Ramsey Alexander, Mr. Bruce Bolling, and Col. Anita McMiller, USA, Ret. These professionals were selected because of their everyday work with veterans issues and expertise in the veterans affairs and public policy arena. The Braintrust was designed to bring their work, insights, research findings, and historical background to the attention of the general public and leaders in government.

During the Braintrust, Congressman BISHOP reminded African Americans that September 18 marked yet another important day, National MIA/POW Recognition Day. He stated that a number of military bases are located within middle and southern Georgia, and that the new National POW/MIA Museum, dedicated this past spring within Andersonville National Historic Site near Americus, lies within his Congressional district. The MIA/POW issue is indeed an emotional one for him and veterans' families because for them there is never closure, just never ending grief and uncertainty.